

Global funding for education facing stagnation: Kailash Satyarthi

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Geneva: Rueing that global funding for education has stagnated over the past four years, Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi has said an additional USD 22 billion annually, which is just four-and-a-half days of global military expenditure, can bring all children to school.

"Unfortunately, only 4 per cent of total ODA (Official Development Assistance) spending goes on education. Unfortunately, only one per cent of the total humanitarian aid goes for education and what we are asking for is an additional USD 22 billion annually can bring all children to school. And that is just four and a half days of global military expenditure," Satyarthi said, launching the World Report on Child Labour 2015 of the International Labour Organisation.

Satyarthi, whose decades-long campaign to end child labour in India and elsewhere won him the Nobel Peace prize last year, said global funding for education -- the best means to fight child labour -- has stagnated over the past four years.

"In the last 15 years there has been an increase from about a billion dollars in ODA spending in education for children to about three and a half, almost four billion. But there has been a stagnation in the last four years, rather a decrease in the global ODA spending on education and that is a big fear. So that is the gap?USD 22 billion?and that is a big gap," he added.

Satyarthi said global funding for education has not increased in recent years partly due to economic recession and donors' perceptions that education had made huge strides in developing countries but that is not really true.

"The decrease began with the economic recession few years ago and in the aftermath continued. Also, many donor governments started feeling that education has already or almost been achieved and that is not really true. Sometimes the governments themselves are not able to prove their efficiency in providing quality education and the donors lost interest, so it is a combination of factors," Satyarthi said explaining why ODA has decreased.

Stating that there were 58 million children currently out of school across the world, the child rights activist said, "I have been advocating for the last 35 years that eradication of child labour and quality education are the two sides of the same coin. We cannot achieve the one without the other."

Satyarthi also pointed out that there are between 400,000 and 500,000 child soldiers across the world and the actual numbers could be far higher because there are hidden militant groups kidnapping children and forcing them to use guns.

"Look at what's happening in Syria, in Iraq, Nigeria and in Afghanistan," he said.

According to the latest report by ILO, 168 million children are in child labour including 120 million between the ages of five and 14.

The report said 47.5 million adolescents between the age of 15 and 17 are globally employed in hazardous occupation. In India, 3.8 percent of total adolescents aged 15 to 17 years are in hazardous occupations.